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THE TEACHING OF  
CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES IN THE  
ADAIR, IOWA, HIGH SCHOOL

BY

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A FIELD REPORT

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1622-19

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS . . . . .	iii
LIST OF TABLES. . . . .	v
Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION. . . . .	1
Statement of the Problem	
Methods of Procedure	
Author's Statement	
Communism As A Controversial Issue	
in Education	
Identification and Treatment of Communists	
Rights of the Individual	
The Task of Education	
Conclusion	
II. ADAIR, IOWA . . . . .	23
Early Settlement of Adair	
The Fire	
Jesse James	
Education in Early Adair	
Adair Today	
Adair's Social Life	
Adair's Churches	
Adair's Schools	
Summary	
III. SURVEY RESULTS. . . . .	49
Characteristics of Persons Surveyed	
Services	
Teachers' Reports	
IV. CONCLUSION. . . . .	68
APPENDIX. . . . .	73
BIBLIOGRAPHY. . . . .	78

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
I. Characteristics of Persons Surveyed, 1955 . . .	51
II. Should High School Students Have the Freedom to Learn Despite the Controversial Nature of the Issue? 1955 . . . . .	55
III. Who Should Set the Limitations of the Freedom to Learn? 1955. . . . .	56
IV. Do You Think That the Twelve Week Army Basic Program is the Proper Place to Receive Instruction About Communism? 1955. . . . .	58
V. Would You Favor Having Your Public Schools Teaching About Communism? 1955. . . . .	59
VI. To Whom, or What, Would Such Teaching Be Dangerous? 1955 . . . . .	61
VII. Are You Aware of the Ideological Conflict Between Communism and Republicanism? 1955 . . .	63
VIII. Do You Feel, Perhaps, That Ignoring the Communist Doctrine Before Our Children in the Classroom Makes Them More Vulnerable to Communist Propaganda? 1955 . . . . .	64
IX. Do You Feel Such A Program Would Be of Service to the: Nation, Students, West, U. S. Army, Communism? 1955 . . . . .	67

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The "communist menace" and public awareness of that menace has resulted in a general feeling of mistrust and anxiety among citizens. The Republic has drifted toward an atmosphere hostile to its traditions of personal security and fair play.

#### Statement of the Problem

Anglo-Saxon tradition holds that a person is innocent until proven guilty and that criminal guilt can be established only by due process of law. Yet, such disturbing symptoms as "guilt by association" and "guilt by heredity" keep appearing across the country. In process is a "crusade" designed not only to frustrate communism but to formulate a positive definition of Americanism. It is viewed by many as a disturbing element involving the whole of America, but more specifically, the schools of America.

The fundamental issue to be decided is whether the school and its teachers have, or do not have, the right to teach about matters of a controversial nature. In this study, that controversy is communism.

The writer is a teacher of social studies in the Adair, Iowa high school. As such, the problem of handling controversial issues in the classroom is a very real one. The question of how to handle those issues poses very definite problems to social studies teachers everywhere. Not the least of these problems is public reaction to such a teaching program.

Significance of the study.--Although many teachers recognize the need to teach about communism, they fear public reaction toward their characters, their patriotism, and their jobs. School administrators often fear that public relations will be damaged through a lack of understanding by parents, clergy, boards of education, and the general lay public.

Purpose of the study.--The purpose of this study, then, was to determine the attitude of the community of Adair, Iowa toward the study of communism in the high school social studies program of that community. To conduct this study, three steps were involved. These were:

1. To prepare a statement of the basic democratic freedoms and their relationship to education in the high school, with special attention to the place of "controversial issues" in the classroom.
2. To explore the feelings of citizens of Adair, Iowa concerning this question of teaching about communism. (This involved the preparation of a questionnaire as an instrument to yield this information).
3. To compare parental, or adult, thinking with student thinking in relationship to this problem.

As a matter of interest but not a basic purpose of this study, it was decided to determine the opinions of Adair high school teachers as to their competence to teach about communism. These teachers were given a questionnaire with an additional set of five questions. These were:

1. Would you feel well enough informed to teach about communism?
2. Do you feel adequately trained by your college to teach about communism?
3. Do you feel such a training program by both high schools and colleges should be undertaken?
4. Do you feel such a program would be of service to the (a) nation, (b) students, (c) West, (d) United States Army, and (e) communists?
5. In your opinion, are the schools of the United States doing all they can to combat the infiltration of communist doctrines into the minds of our youngsters?

Limitations.--No attempt has been made to plan a course which might embrace the teaching about communism in the Adair Public Schools. Rather, the purpose was to determine whether or not such a teaching program would be palatable to the residents of Adair, or feasible from the standpoint of teacher qualification in the Adair public school.

A questionnaire was used to determine the attitude of the residents of Adair toward this problem. The questionnaire was sent to an unselected group and the results are not presented as representing accurately all groups of the population.



Since Adair Public Schools extend instructional work to, and have responsibility for, the immediate surrounding trade territory, this study includes some of those persons who live outside the school district but who are served by its educational facilities.

Definition of terms.--The author encountered some skepticism in regard to the meaning of the word "communism." To answer these questions, it was necessary to devote some time to oral discussion with individuals. Actually, the author had reference to all types of communism, as is shown by the questionnaire; however, particular attention was paid to the Soviet type of international communism. As people usually react to the word communism without examining specifically what is meant, it was thought that narrow or fine definitions would actually block the normal reaction to this term.

#### Methods of Procedure

The writer has taught social studies in Iowa schools for six years. This gave him a firsthand knowledge of the problems involved in the teaching of controversial issues in the classroom.

Much time in the preparation of this study was devoted to background reading in the Drake University Library.

The preparation, administration, and reliability of the questionnaire.--The questionnaire used for this field report was developed through the cooperative effort of several persons, all of whom were attending a seminar class at Drake University during the summer of 1954. In preliminary investigation no similar questionnaire material was encountered by which to judge the final form.<sup>1</sup>

The questionnaire was presented to 140 Adair residents. Forty of the recipients were students of the eleventh and twelfth grades of Adair High School. The remaining one hundred were adults of the community. Of the forty sent to students, all were returned. Of the one hundred sent to adults, sixty were returned. Thus, 71.4 per cent of all questionnaires sent were returned.

This questionnaire was developed for the purpose of revealing the attitudes in the Adair community concerning the teaching about communism in the local high school. It was filled out by adults and students who, for the most part, had had no advance information as to the purpose of the questionnaire. They took the device and answered it, presumably to the best of their abilities, with the knowledge that the information obtained was to be used in connection with the thesis requirement at Drake University.

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<sup>1</sup>A copy of this questionnaire will be found in the Appendix, pp. 75-77.

The answers to this questionnaire are respected as being honest statements of opinion. In no instance is it thought the questionnaire was filled out in contradiction to that person's fundamental thoughts and attitudes concerning the problem.

The results of the questionnaire represent the opinion of approximately one-sixteenth of the people of the Adair community and are not presented as representing the entire community.

The necessity of conversation.--Only in a few instances was it necessary to converse directly with those persons answering the questionnaire. When conversation was necessary, it was usually carried on after the questionnaire had been filled out. Some of the persons answering the questionnaire complained that the questions could be interpreted in many different ways. This is not uncommon in questionnaire studies and must be considered when interpreting responses.

Questions.--To arrive at a conclusion as to opinion in the Adair community toward the teaching about communism, certain key questions were asked. Some of these were:

10. Do you feel that youngsters of all ages should have the freedom to learn regardless of the controversial nature of the issue?
14. Would you favor our public schools teaching about communism?
25. Would you object to the course?

Before these questions were asked, however, other pertinent information was wanted, such as characteristics of the questioned person--his parental status and citizenship standing. Also included were questions regarding his interests and his views on the freedom to speak, the freedom to learn, and the like. This is included in items from four through thirteen of the questionnaire.

An attempt was made to determine opinion as to who, if anyone, should set the limits of the freedom to learn, and whether this freedom to learn included the right to learn about politics and political philosophies.

After item number fourteen, the dangers of teaching about communism in the classroom and the degree or extent of an accepted pattern of such a program were questioned. Then, in questions twenty-three through twenty-six, the interest in, and the objections to the course were measured. From twenty-seven to the end of the questionnaire, an attempt was made to measure the awareness to, and the fears of, the people of Adair toward the communist menace.

#### Author's Statement

The writer is not an atheist, a pacifist, an anarchist, a socialist, or a bolshevik. He has little sympathy for the present minority parties. But he is puzzled by the present trend toward conformity; the acceptance of America as it is rather than the establishment of a free market for

intellectual inquiry. He wanted to discover what policy a classroom teacher should follow in teaching about communism, how much public criticism is real, and how much imagined. He realized that there had been innumerable articles written by experts in the field of education and political science on this very subject but he did not feel that these answered his specific question: "How would the teaching about communism be accepted right here in the school district in which I am now teaching?" A study of that district was undertaken.

#### Communism As A Controversial Issue in Education

##### Objectionable Practices of the Communists and the Attempts to Deal with Those Practices

This nation is embarked upon a venture to prove that men can have control of their own lives. That venture is, as yet, unproved. That community is in danger; it is invaded from within; it is threatened from without; it faces an ideological crisis through which it may fail to pass. And the two important issues which may yet prove to be the deciding factors of this struggle are the rights of minority parties and academic freedom.

"Congress shall make no law," so runs the first amendment, " . . . abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of people peaceably to assemble . . . ."

American communists claim that a long course of

years now proves that the government in power is unable to cope with the many and complex issues of the day. They say the government ought to be overthrown. They would reject the American meaning of democracy, destroying it if they could and replacing it with a meaning of their own.<sup>1</sup>

Under the first amendment, it is clear these people have a right to assemble, speak, and believe as they will.<sup>2</sup> If one's particular belief is such that he can wholly subscribe to such a program, or even dedicate himself to it, he is free to do so. However, the question arises again and again, "Is such a person qualified to teach in our American public schools?"

Now, abstaining from countercharges of disloyalty and tyranny, let it be recognized that the issue as a conflict between two vital principles and endeavor to find the basis of reconciliation between "order and freedom."<sup>3</sup>

It is generally presumed that all good communists follow their party's line without variance. If this is true, their assumptions are determined for them by the organization to which they belong. The theory or belief to

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<sup>1</sup>Archibald MacLeish, "To Make Men Free," Atlantic Monthly, CLXXXVIII (November, 1951), 28.

<sup>2</sup>Communications Association v. Douds, 339 U.S. 382.

<sup>3</sup>Free Speech in the United States, quoted in Howard Mumford Jones, Primer of Intellectual Freedom (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1949), p. 45.

which they subscribe has ceased to be subject to criticism, examination, and reconstruction by them. They often follow communistic practice by becoming propagandists for one opinion, adopting the party line, silencing criticism, or impairing freedom of thought and expression in their presence. The adherents of communism are expected to toe the line of conformity laid down by some prior authority no matter how irrational or intolerant it becomes.<sup>1</sup> Communists often indulge in extreme measures to hasten the "inevitable" revolution from capitalism to communism.<sup>2</sup> They would believe that where there is class conflict, truth is obscured by class interests; under Soviet Socialism, the Communist Party can perceive the truth, pure and unadulterated.

To combat communism, and particularly to combat the communists teaching in the schools, many cities and some states have attempted to pass laws, to censor texts, and to screen employees of the school systems. This has been done in the name of "Americanism." Such actions have been justified on the grounds that the state has a vital concern regarding the attitudes of the young toward the society in which they live. The state must preserve the integrity of the schools. To do this, they have every right, according

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<sup>1</sup>Henry Ehlers, Crucial Issues in Education (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1955), p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

to the proponents of this point of view to investigate into the teacher's conduct, his associations, and his affiliations. These persons and these groups would say that schools cannot, and must not, remain neutral when it comes to the question of liberty versus tyranny. They may admit that such actions as they propose would not measure up to the true meaning of the Constitution, but would hastily add that true loyalty may require hostility to certain provisions of the Constitution itself.

Many Americans would say that members of the Communist Party of the United States should not be employed as teachers. The New York Legislature, in passing the Feinberg Law, stated that propaganda can be disseminated among the children by those who teach them and to whom they look for guidance, authority, and leadership. The legislature further found that the members of such groups<sup>1</sup> use their positions to advocate and teach their doctrines, and are frequently bound by oath, agreement, pledge, or understanding, to follow, advocate, and teach a prescribed party line or group dogma or doctrine without regard to truth or free inquiry. This propaganda, the legislature declared, is sufficiently subtle to escape detection in the classroom; thus, the menace of such infiltration into the classroom is difficult to measure.

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<sup>1</sup>Meaning the Communist Party.



Identification and Treatment of Communists

There is something particularly offensive to the concept of education about permitting an extremist of any type to use the classroom as a vantage point from which to expound his particular theories. But there is a difference between the verb "to teach" and the verb "to indoctrinate." Some things are indisputable, like the order of the alphabet, and these things are to be learned no matter what the party affiliations of the teacher. Controversial issues can be explained, discussed with both sides given with various affirmations and denials. Teaching, in this case, is explanation, not dogma. It means, basically, that the answer to questions like these seems to be such-and-such in the opinions of well-informed persons, but that there is room for doubt and opportunity for discussion. Teaching is not indoctrination. To analyze a theory is not to accept it.

Many Americans believe that Soviet Communism has penetrated deeply into American life, and that the Chambers and the Bentleys joined the communist movement because its purpose was one to which they could wholly subscribe.<sup>1</sup> Most Americans are afraid of communism. They fear the communist tactics of revolution, coup d etat, and seizure of power. They realize that the basic doctrines laid down thirty-five

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<sup>1</sup>W. F. Russell, "American Vs. European Policies Regarding Communism and Education," Teachers' College Record, LIV (January, 1953), 181.

and more years ago have never been repudiated.<sup>1</sup> The efforts of the Feinberg Laws, McCarthys, and Houston Rallies have had some possible effect.

However, if such charges, with their usual accompaniment of investigations, book-banning, and efforts at intimidation become too violent, frequent, and widespread, they can seriously impair the efficiency of the school system in discharging its essential functions in American life.<sup>2</sup>

If laws should be passed restraining the teachers from joining minority parties, or having affiliations with certain "front" organizations, or from attending peace rallies, what is likely to happen? Teachers will be under constant surveillance, their pasts investigated for any signs of disloyalty, and their remarks scrutinized. Every student will be an informer, every principal an investigator. A shadow of doubt will be cast over the classroom. There can be no freedom of the intellect in such an environment. Teaching would be a matter of conformity to the conservative view.<sup>3</sup> Learning would become a robot type process rather than a right and a privilege.

Who, after all, are the disloyal? Those who would seek to overthrow the government? Certainly! But what about

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 181.

<sup>2</sup>Educational Policies Commission, American Education and International Tensions (Washington: National Education Association, 1949), p. 38.

<sup>3</sup>William O. Douglas, Dissenting Opinion, Adler v. Board of Education, 342 U.S. 485, 1952.

those who inflame racial hatred? Or those who sow religious and class dissensions, violate the freedom of the ballot box, or refuse to vote? Are those disloyal who use the filibuster or deny equal educational facilities, or make a farce of trial by jury or press for special privileges at the expense of the Republic? Can it be those who engage in graft and corruption? Or perhaps those who for selfish gain would start a war?<sup>1</sup> Could the disloyal not also include those who would subvert the educational process to a system of conformity?

Then, too, how does one identify a communist? What price can be considered reasonable for purging communists? If we purge communists, should we not also purge fellow travelers? If one subscribes to the thesis that communists per se are dangerous, then must anyone who acts suspicious to even the most suspicious persons be removed from office and purged?<sup>2</sup> Should not the vegetarians, prohibitionists, Catholics, Jews, and Masons also be purged? Where does it end? Those who begin coercive elimination of dissent soon find themselves exterminating dissenters. Forced acceptance of opinion achieves only the unanimity of the graveyard.

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<sup>1</sup>Henry Steele Commager, "Who Is Loyal to America?" Harpers Magazine, CXCV (September, 1947), 198.

<sup>2</sup>Laurence H. Chamberlain, Loyalty and Legislative Action: A Survey of Activity by the New York State Legislature 1919-1939 (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1951), p. 218.

Rights of the Individual

The founding fathers of the United States of America put their faith in the common man. It may well be that the greatest gamble they took was in the writing of the first amendment. They believed that, in any given situation, if the individual were free to communicate, to speak, to write, to read, he would, in the long run, adopt the course which would be best for him. Those men believed in a "people" and not the "masses" of totalitarian dictatorship. They believed in a collection of individual men, all dedicated to a process of acquiring agreement among themselves so that each of them may live for himself.<sup>1</sup> Their reliance was placed on the inquiring human mind. They realized they could not formulate the laws for future generations so they left for each succeeding generation the task of passing the laws of their own particular era. Those men were students of history. They wanted freedom for the individual because they knew of the greater risks of repression. They not only provided no censors for the thoughts of future generations but expressly prohibited censorship. They not only provided religious, moral, and intellectual freedom to their descendants, they forbade any authority to intrude upon that freedom.<sup>2</sup> They trusted the common man to solve such difficulties as he

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<sup>1</sup>MacLeish, op. cit., p. 30.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 30.

would incur.

The strength of this nation is founded in the human mind. Resiliency, adaptability, attitudes, ideas, ideals, and the like are centered there.<sup>1</sup> Americans are not stalled by censorship nor destroyed by political autocracy, and are a potent force, free to make the future for themselves.

Most Americans will agree that the communist threat is too dangerous to be ignored.<sup>2</sup> All agree that anyone whose party membership impairs his teaching should be dismissed. But it is possible for a party member to throw off the shackles of intellectual restraint. It has been estimated that for every person who has remained in the American Communist Party during the past thirty years, twenty have left it.<sup>3</sup> Does not this fact alone justify a more patient policy than the passage of hit-or-miss legislation which have the potency of self-destruction?

Censorship, whether of an individual or of a group, ignores "the fact that the desire for freedom is strong and widespread, and that when this desire is repressed, a conflict is created that is irrepressible."<sup>4</sup> The whole strength

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>2</sup>Russell, op. cit., p. 183.

<sup>3</sup>Ehlers, op. cit., p. 84.

<sup>4</sup>Ralph E. Himstead, "Correspondence with A Chapter Officer," A. A. U. P. Bulletin, XXXV (1949), 554.

of a government based on reason depends on the free transmission of ideas, on the condition that reason can be set right when it is wrong. It demands that all sides of an issue be presented.<sup>1</sup> The repression of ideas has never contributed to governmental stability over an extended period of time.

### The Task of Education

The academic profession of this country has a great responsibility. It is that of clarifying for the American public the meaning and values of freedom.<sup>2</sup> The acknowledged fact that moral, social, and political progress have not kept pace with the mastery of the physical world shows the need for more intensified research, fresh insights, vigorous criticism, and inventiveness. The scholar's mission requires the study and examination of unpopular ideas, of ideas considered abhorrent and even dangerous, and the interpretation of these ideas to the public. To block these interpretations by repressive measures, to equate loyalty with conformity, to fear new systems, or to limit the freedom of speech would not be in the public interest.

The alternative to repression is the long road of education, the acceptance of the judgment of the ordinary

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<sup>1</sup>Ehlers, op. cit., p. 84.

<sup>2</sup>Himstead, op. cit., p. 554.

citizen, and the premise that he will accept the good and reject the evil. Education requires patience, tolerance, and faith in the principles and practices of democracy. It requires the faith that when all sides of the issue are presented, the American public will choose the side of democracy. It thrives on the principle that this public will be better citizens for having made the choice themselves as opposed to having been coerced into a decision.<sup>1</sup>

The task of education is to enlighten the community, to produce critical and creative minds, and to provide citizens who know what they believe in and why they believe in it. Democracy is based upon the possibility of change. Change can mean progress only if it is selective and purposeful.<sup>2</sup> Following generations have no means of progressing if their teachers are submissive or have been drained of all vitality.

Democracy and science have been able to progress because they have embraced principles of self-alteration which permit the correction of error and partial truth under an evolutionary process of inquiry.<sup>3</sup> To fear and stifle the

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<sup>1</sup>Robert Maynard Hutchins, "Statement to the Subversive Activities Commission of Illinois State Legislature, (April, 1949).

<sup>2</sup>Chamberlain, op. cit., p. 221.

<sup>3</sup>Ehlers, op. cit., p. 84.

free inquiry in institutions is to stop progress. Such fears may ultimately subject the people to a despotism as evil as any dreaded: the despotism of the orthodox view, of the conventional thought, of the accepted approach.

American schools should continue to present a clear picture of the principles of the American way of life. They should instill a desire to make these principles prevail in the students' lives and in the life of their country. They should enrich the students with the American traditions of freedom, equality, democracy, tolerance, experimentation, cooperation, and pluralism.<sup>1</sup> They should be allowed to search for truth on the terms of the freest possible scope and should have the greatest possible encouragement in their efforts to preserve the learning of the past and to further develop the learning of the present. To such a student come the rewarding elements of rational thought, intelligent judgment, and an understanding use of acquired knowledge.

American students should not be denied social, political, or economic investigation and research. They should not be denied the right to know of other countries or other systems. They should not be afraid of change or dissent. They should be trusted to use intelligence and common sense in their explorations of the unknown. Studying

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<sup>1</sup>Commager, op. cit., p. 198.



a philosophy does not mean proclaiming it.<sup>1</sup>

Teachers should be grave, reverent, scholarly, and high-minded. In the classroom they should abstain from voicing their opinions on controversial issues. If they speak in public, even outside their official capacity as a teacher, they should remember their special position in the community imposes special obligations. They should remember that their remarks might brand the institution which they represent. But they nevertheless should be free to hold opinions, to discuss these opinions, to write of them, and to otherwise enjoy the privileges of a full-fledged citizen.

### Conclusion

Before summarizing, let the author make it clear that he abhors Russian Communism as he does every other type of totalitarianism. He shares the concern of the American people at the existence of an international conspiracy whose goal is the destruction of America's cherished institutions. He feels certain that a police state would sound the death knell to learning institutions as they are known. However, he feels that an hysterical, fanatical approach to the problem of communism and communists in the schools will, in the end, defeat the very purpose for which it was intended.

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<sup>1</sup>Education in A Divided World, quoted in Jones, op. cit., p. 21.

It is no exaggeration to say that the world of American great-grandfathers was far different from what it is today, and that today's world is extremely different from what the world of 2000 A. D. will be. It would be unwise to close the minds to criticism, to dissent, to observations of the non-conformist. It would be unwise to adopt a procedure of intolerance to persons of different ideas. If democracy is to flourish, it must have criticism; if government is to function, it must have dissent. It would be unwise for institutions of education in this country to emulate communist regimes in the repression of the freedom of thought and expression.<sup>1</sup>

As Dwight D. Eisenhower stated in May of 1954, whenever and for whatever reason people attempt to crush ideas, to mask convictions, to view every neighbor as a possible enemy, to seek conformity, then a free society is in danger of dissolution.<sup>2</sup> "Whenever man's knowledge and the use thereof is restricted, man's freedom in the same measure disappears . . . ."<sup>3</sup> Dedication to truth and freedom at home and abroad, does not require--and cannot tolerate--fear, hysteria, and intimidation. These broad

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<sup>1</sup>Himstead, op. cit., pp. 551-558.

<sup>2</sup>Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Man's Right to Knowledge and the Free Use Thereof," Vital Speeches, XX (June, 1954), 516.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

undue restraints and pressures applied by groups or individuals result in censorship. When overzealous partisans attempt to legislate intelligence, morality, and loyalty, such partisanship becomes a definite threat to democracy. Once a free society entrusts the power of censorship, where does it end?

No faster way exists of making communism flourish than by making martyrs of the handful of communists now in this country.<sup>1</sup> To discipline teachers or students on the basis of irresponsible accusations or suspicion can never be condoned. Only totalitarian governments insist upon conformity. They do so at their own peril.<sup>2</sup>

To the public or in the universities, teachers should be allowed to present their own convictions; but in high schools where attendance, because of public opinion, is nearly compulsory, the students should not be made to submit to indoctrination of any type. Let it be remembered that the right of the individual to form opinions, uncoerced by anyone, is fundamental, and that what knowledge now acquired should be presented from an unbiased standpoint.

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<sup>1</sup>Freedom in the College, A Policy, quoted in Jones, op. cit., p. 23.

<sup>2</sup>Commager, op. cit., p. 195.

## CHAPTER II

### ADAIR, IOWA

This chapter deals with the history of Adair, its settlement, its growth, its present condition. Among the resources used in collecting data for the chapter were: the files of the Adair Weekly News, the History of Guthrie and Adair Counties, Iowa,<sup>1</sup> and interviews with various townspeople.<sup>2</sup>

#### Early Settlement of Adair

In 1868, the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad built a section house to accommodate the headquarters of its engineering corps. The Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific was forced to excavate the summit of the great watershed of the State of Iowa, and so, named this point, Summit Cut. It constituted the highest point of the entire railroad system and was the second highest elevation in the State of Iowa. This became the site of the community known as Adair.

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<sup>1</sup>Continental Historical Company, History of Guthrie and Adair Counties, Iowa (Springfield, Illinois: The Company, 1884).

<sup>2</sup>Most helpful of whom were: Edward Littler, Jr., Bruce Morse, Lynn Kilcoin, George Wegner, Wayne Hobson, and the Reverends Melville, Tschetter, Hoeing, and Weiss.

The first settlers came to Summit Township in 1869. This was some years after the rest of Adair and Guthrie Counties had been settled. These first men were the Sisson Brothers, followed directly by John Chestnut, Sr. The plat for the land on which the eastern portion of the town was laid was filed on August 20, 1872, by George C. Tallman of Brooklyn, New York. He named it Adair in honor of General John Adair, an officer in the War of 1812, and the sixth governor of the State of Kentucky. By 1873, the town contained eighteen persons. Fifteen of these were section hands and the remaining three were their masters. No building was done until the summer of 1873, at which time the railroad built a depot, and a Mr. Charles Stuart put in a lumberyard. The population jumped from eighteen persons in 1873 to eighty-four in 1874. In 1882 Adair's population was estimated by George W. Wilkinson, the founder of the Adair Weekly News, to be 150. In 1884, Adair contained five hundred people and by 1890, 722.

Early Adair was located in the heart of a good agricultural region. It was served by a fine railroad, and was almost midway between Des Moines and Council Bluffs. By serving an area of twenty miles square, it was able to grow rapidly, until, by 1894, it contained forty business houses. Adair was generally considered, at least by local inhabitants, as "the best trading town in western Iowa."

The Irish settled to the south of Adair and the Germans to the north. Both held to their own customs and languages as best they could. Merchants hired German-speaking girls to "wait on" the German trade. The Germans built and maintained their own school. This school had as many as thirty-eight pupils and was under the tutelage of a Mr. List.

Clashes between the two groups were inevitable. These clashes became more and more frequent until the Saturday night fight on the Presbyterian Church lawn became commonplace. Weapons for these fights consisted mainly of fists, clubs, and wagon brakes. Arms were broken, ribs were crushed, but no serious injuries were ever reported. Few, if any, knives or broken bottles were used.

Adair, being at the crest of the hill, was virtually inaccessible in the springtime. The roads became nearly impassible. The road to the south was a winding affair, having to twist around the great cut to the immediate south, then up to the summit once again, and out to the rolling prairie beyond.

### The Fire

The summer of 1894 was hot and dry. Crops failed miserably. The grass and leaves were a latent tinderbox. Great prairie fires swept the state. Water was at an all-time low. About midnight, August 7, 1894, the fire bell

rang. By 3:00 A. M., thirty-one business establishments were completely destroyed. Only nine were left standing. The town had suffered a \$100,000 fire.

On Tuesday morning the sight was a sad one. Where twelve hours before were two blocks of prosperous business houses well-stocked, and furnishing the necessities of life to a trade district 20 miles square, was now only a great heap of smoking ruins, with carcasses of dead horses (10) giving off a sickly odor, and even the walks and crossings burned away.<sup>1</sup>

It is interesting to note the determination of these early settlers. Before the blaze was extinguished, plans were laid for a new and greater Adair.

Adair is in bad shape but far from dead. Another year will find one of the best built towns in this part of the state and business will be going on at a more rapid and substantial rate than ever.

One of the pleasing things is the way in which businessmen are helping each other out since it is all over. There is the most friendly spirit manifested between competitors in the same business, and men in different lines of trade.<sup>2</sup>

As the following year wore on, an unusually high number of suicides were reported in the paper. Also a few, including the newspaper publisher himself, insisted that debtors come in and pay or, at least, explain why they could not do so. One or two stores closed; a doctor scampered out of town in the middle of the night; and at least one partnership was dissolved.

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<sup>1</sup>Adair Weekly News, August 9, 1894, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., August 16, 1894, p. 1.

Immediately following the fire, however, there was no hint of fatalism. The Adair Weekly News, on August 16, included the following:

Pomeroy (following the 'cyclone') was rebuilt by the help of the rest of the state, but Adair will rebuild itself . . . .

Every businessman who was burnt out is going to have a chance to go back into business again someplace in town.<sup>1</sup>

These passages are being included to demonstrate the apparent unanimity of thought and action in early Adair.

A town that can stand a complete crop failure, a money panic and a \$100,000 conflagration all in one year and still pull out on top as Adair has this year, is all right and can afford to put in water works and electric lights in the near future. Now is the time to begin stirring up this matter.<sup>2</sup>

Adair was progressive. It welcomes new businesses. The merchants listened to every prospective venture. Sometimes, they bought shares, as in the first flouring mill, in order for a business to get started. The publisher of the paper welcomed the Grange, embraced first the Democratic Party, and he was not averse to switching to the Republican ranks when he could no longer agree with the Democratic stand on bimettalism. The town had an Adair Improvement Association with the name of "Boostets." They held an annual banquet and smoker, deciding what would be good for the town, and what must go.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., August 16, 1894, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., September 6, 1895, p. 1.



At one time, the town marshal requested, at the threat of impoundment, that all animals be either tied or fenced, and stopped from running loose all around the town. The result of this, evidently, was the securing of a town pasture, a "common," so to speak.

### Jesse James

One thing that happened which was neither of any value or detriment to the town of Adair itself, was the Jesse James holdup of a Rock Island train two miles west of Adair in the summer of 1873. This was the first train robbery west of the Mississippi River. The James gang had been loitering around the neighborhood for several days. Some worked for the neighboring farmers; others just loafed. On the twenty-first of July, the gang jerked the spikes and tied a rope around a rail. The spot of the robbery was so chosen that the train would be lumbering up the steep grade toward the summit and just rounding a curve beneath an overhanging bank to the right, with a rather steep runoff to the left.

The rail was pulled! The train caromed into the bank, killing the engineer. The gunmen grabbed two or three thousand dollars in gold, then fled southward.

Levi Clay, the first section boss on this part of the railroad, carried the news into Casey, nine miles east. It was claimed that Levi found several gold bricks in the

slough north of the robbed train, thus saving the railroad thousands of dollars.

#### Education in Early Adair

Speculation prompted Mr. Stuart to build the first building in Adair. Too successful to spend all his time on one project, he hired a Mr. Franklin Arnold to care for his Adair enterprises. Mr. Arnold, a former schoolteacher and a sincere advocate of public schools, was chiefly instrumental in giving Adair its first schoolhouse.

In 1874, just two years after the original plat had been filed, Mrs. Captain H. P. Starr opened a school over the D. W. Moss Drug Store. It was in session three months and had eighteen students. A two-room frame school building was erected atop the summit two blocks from the business district during the following year, 1875. It cost \$2,450. Mrs. Starr continued teaching until the autumn of 1876. When she left, sixty-six pupils were enrolled. Two teachers were hired to replace her.

In 1888, a wing was added to the east of the original two rooms and in 1892, a west wing was added. In 1892, also, the building was refurnished and fitted with steam heaters. It was insured for \$5,500.

Professor Adam Pickett held the post of superintendent in 1894-1895. He seems to have been a good school man for that time. He was supported by Mr. Kitch, the publisher, who

was a former school superintendent, and by a majority of the townspeople. Apparently he was a bit harsh--as teachers of that time are usually caricatured.

Professor Pickett, under the heading, "Educational," had this to say in the Adair Weekly News of March 1, 1894:

In youth most children are lovers of outdoor exercises, and if their minds can be directed toward the study of their surroundings, it may safeguard against temptation . . . . It is plain that what the child needs is some intellectual food when out of the immediate presence of the teacher, some food along the lines indicated and so popularized as to not be beyond the capacity of the child.<sup>1</sup>

The Adair Weekly News of May 24, 1894, declared that year's graduating class to be the largest in Adair's history, with seven girls and two boys receiving their diplomas. It is interesting to note that the seven girls were dressed alike with white dresses and large red bows. The boys dressed alike with black suits and white shirts. The boys stood at either end of the semicircle of students. Each member of the class gave a talk and the "band and singers furnished some good music for the exercises . . . ." <sup>2</sup> Superintendent Moyer of Atlantic gave the address. This was the fifth annual graduating class from Adair High School.

Six persons were graduated in 1895 including five boys and one girl. All again made speeches. The editor

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., March 1, 1894, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., May 24, 1894, p. 1.

reviewed each speech and included, seemingly with tongue in check: "Byron Hinkle told of the many wonderful things we may expect in 'The Twentieth Century.' He expects to be able to take us from Chicago to New York in an hour, before the end of that century."<sup>1</sup>

The fire which destroyed much of the town in 1894, did not damage the school building proper. During the following March, however, the school building burned to the ground.

At 11:45 A. M. Monday the dread fire alarm sounded and our citizens were not slow in responding to its summons. Citizens of both sexes began carrying seats and other furnishings out of the school buildings . . . . But since the chances of saving the school were hopeless, the (brave fire laddies) began directing their efforts to the row of buildings just across the street east of it. The wind was blowing a hurricane and carried burning brands all over the eastern portion of the town. By 1 o'clock the schoolhouse was nothing but a great heap of coals, and the fire was under complete control.<sup>2</sup>

Once again, the determination of the townspeople to have the best shows itself.

As soon as the fire was under control the board of directors was called together . . . and began considering plans for the new building they expect to erect during the coming summer. It is not definitely decided just what the new building will be like, but the directors are practically unanimous in favor of a square eight-room brick, well built and fitted up with modern improvements. All seem

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., May 24, 1895, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., March 29, 1895.

to recognize the economy there is in doing a thing right when it is done.<sup>1</sup>

The loss in the schoolhouse fire was estimated to have been \$10,000 of which \$5,500 was covered by insurance. The fire occurred on Monday, March 25, 1895. On Monday, May 6, 1895,

. . . the school board . . . decided to call an election to vote on the question of bonding the districts for the purpose of erecting a new school building. This, with the bonds already issued is the full amount for which the district can be bonded. And, together with the amount of insurance that is due, would put up a neat and substantial building of sufficient size to accommodate the schools. If, however, they should fail to collect any part of the insurance the board proposes to put up as large a building as they can for the available funds and put it up substantial and in such form that it can be built onto without extra expense. There is no member of the board in favor of having a cheap or shoddy building put up, but all favor having what is done done substantially and in good taste, but without extravagance.

(signed) J. H. Porter, Sec'y of Board<sup>2</sup>

Thirteen contractors bid on the proposed new building. The high bid received was for \$10,702. Peter Wind, of Council Bluffs, Iowa, whose bid was low at \$7,089, was awarded the contract.

If these bids seem extremely low, consider the markets as reported at the time: butter, eight cents; eggs, six cents; ear corn, fourteen cents, wheat, fifty cents,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., March 29, 1895.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., May 10, 1895, p. 1.

hens, four cents, and turkeys, five cents.

The new school was built of brick. It was nearly sixty feet square with a bell tower rising in the southwest corner. The basement consisted of five rooms, while each of the upper stories had four large rooms with spacious halls connecting. This same building is still in use today, and, as might be expected, is a firetrap. According to its janitor, if a fire should start in the basement, the school would be gone within fifteen minutes.

Following is an excerpt from the Adair Weekly News of March 1, 1894.

The school board of the Independent District of Adair makes the following estimate of funds necessary for the use of the school for the coming year. For the contingency fund \$1,100; for the teachers' fund, \$2,000; for the schoolhouse fund, a one mill levy.<sup>1</sup>

Another excerpt stated that:

The Iowa State Teachers Association was again bored this year with those collegiate fools who are trying to get the higher institutions of learning in the state classified so as to redound to the manifest advantage of the aforesaid collegiate fools. If these bigoted, narrow-minded old-liners from some of the moss-backed institutions of the state will make a greater effort to classify the students of these institutions and not lay so much stress on the number of 'perfessors' the schools have, the state's educational interests will be materially advanced . . . . Let every school stand upon its own merits instead of using the State Teachers' Association as a sort of auxiliary advertising scheme.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., January 3, 1896.

Whether Publisher Kitch or Superintendent Pickett, or both, were responsible for reporting educational news, they had definite ideas about what they deemed to be "proper" education.

There is a fight on between the University of Wisconsin and the public schools of that state. The University . . . complains that the high school graduates are not fit to enter the university. As if high schools were intended to fit young men and women for the university. There was a time when they were intended to fit young men and women for life. That time ought to be brought back. We have too much smattering and call it education. For the average man, a thorough training in a few branches is to be preferred to a smattering in many. For the educated, let us have an education that means something more than a diploma. We have too many educated men who are still uneducated. Those who are not educated at all are preferred to those who are loosely educated.<sup>1</sup>

The election of new board members is usually a good barometer of public opinion toward existing school policies. If this was true then, as it seems to be now, Adair was still happy with its school in March of 1896. "The school election Monday resulted in the election of W. Berryhill and A. E. Cally as directors. No other ticket was in the field."<sup>2</sup>

The following was also noticed in the same issue:

The Adair Public Schools were never in better condition than at the present time. An excellent new building, neatly arranged and furnished, has

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., December 6, 1895.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., March 13, 1896.

been provided, and a teaching force is employed that is doing the best of work. Professor Adam Pickett . . . has a character just fitted for a place at the head of the public schools. He has succeeded admirably and has an excellent corps of teachers to assist him in his work.<sup>1</sup>

From the February 7, 1896 edition of the Adair Weekly News comes the following:

The Adair County Teachers' Association held its first meeting of the year in the Adair high school room, Saturday.

After the arrival of No. 5, bringing the Stuart, Menlo, and Casey teachers, Attorney G. B. Lynch was called on and gave a very interesting and practical talk on, 'What the Businessman Reasonably Expects from the Public Schools.' Mr. Lynch is of the opinion that the public schools attempt too much and pay too little attention to fundamental principles.

The first topic after dinner was mental exercises in arithmetic by W. Creveling. Mr. Creveling is decidedly in favor of more mental drill in arithmetic work.

It is a pleasure to have the rugged schoolmasters and pretty blushing school ma'ams of Adair and Guthrie Counties meet with us occasionally and Adair will welcome them whenever they choose to come.<sup>2</sup>

The Iowa teachers met for the fortieth time in January in 1895. Over nine hundred attended the event with the Savory House as headquarters.

Many valuable papers were read, and much has been added to the literature of education by this gathering. It is a fortunate thing that the State now publishes the proceedings of this body.

Iowa may be proud of her army of teachers--the men and women who labor not for today, but for all time.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., February 7, 1896, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., February 14, 1896, p. 1.



There is a feeling among the leading teachers and school men of Iowa that school legislation should be shaped by school people, and that many changes are needed in our school laws to meet the necessarily changed conditions in our state.<sup>1</sup>

At a teachers' meeting at Earlham, Iowa, in December of 1895, it was:

RESOLVED: That we deprecate any misuse of English words and especially that teachers would be guilty of such barbarism as to give every male teacher in schools of whatever grade the title of Professor.

RESOLVED: That we believe that Iowa has arrived at a point in her educational progress when education shall be made compulsory, and we would respectfully petition the General Assembly . . . that such a law be passed.<sup>2</sup>

One of the questions put before a county teachers' meeting held at Adair in October of 1897 was "Shall the high schools be maintained?" The general opinion as expressed during the immediate discussion was in the affirmative. June 11, 1897 publication of the Adair Weekly News carried the following:

The wise mother realizes that with forty children, each possibly requiring as much care as her own, teachers can do little individual work; for each of the forty mothers is equally anxious as to the well-being of her child left in the teacher's charge . . . the common interest draws teachers and parent together.

The successful teacher of little ones must have the mother instinct, she must have the mother's heart. She should thoroughly understand child nature. If she lacks this, she lacks the greatest qualifications of a true teacher.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., January 4, 1895, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., December 13, 1895, p. 1.

The teacher in our public schools must certainly realize the fact that she is not a governess in a millionaire's family, but a servant of the common-wealth, dealing with the children of the rich and poor alike.<sup>1</sup>

The June 18, 1897 issue said:

Teachers take the young, undeveloped, plastic mind to prepare it for life, that all it's maturity, it may be whole. Is it true that all that falls short of the perfect character is insanity as all that falls short of the perfect physical body is disease that all insanity may be prevented or healed as all the unsoundness of the body may be? If this is true, then greater our responsibility and much more do we need the sympathy, assistance and cooperation of every good mother to carry on this great and glorious work.<sup>2</sup>

By 1908, the superintendency had changed to a Miss Winifred E. Duffy. The publisher of the Adair Weekly News had also changed from Mr. Kitch to Mr. Roy E. Stacey. Again the publisher backed the superintendent and did not hesitate to publish that fact in the paper.

Among the curriculum innovations begun by Miss Duffy was the entry of Adair High School into the South-western Declamatory Association and the publication of a small paper known as the High School Herald. The staff of this paper represented pupils from each of the high school grades and the purpose was to give these students a "little practical intercourse with the real business world."

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., June 11, 1897, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., June 18, 1897, p. 1.

By May 1, 1908, it was known for sure that Miss Duffy was re-elected by a school board vote of three to two, and would return the next year. The names of the board members and how they voted were published in the same issue of the Adair Weekly News.

#### Adair Today

Adair steadily regressed from 1929 until recently. It regressed both in business and in population. Whether this regression was due to the advent of the automobile or to the stock market crash of 1929, no resident seems to know. The fact remains that business did leave the town, new industry passed it by, and the population declined. During the twenty-five period from 1929 to 1955, only eight new homes were built. Of those eight, one was started before 1946 and three were constructed in 1954. There are a total of 247 homes in Adair.

Prominently displayed on either side of town on U. S. Highway 6 is a sign which reads in part, "ADAIR, HOME OF 1001 FRIENDLY PEOPLE." Actually this sign is misleading. One thousand and one persons were the high point of Adair's population rise during the 1920's. Today's population figure is 823.

It was discovered through interviewing that some local inhabitants feel that Adair's trouble lies neither with the location, nor the automobile, nor the depression.

The trouble lies within the town itself--the inability of the merchants to pull together, to arrive at some workable solution to common ills, or the popular misconception, "let George do it."

According to these persons, those inhabitants who do have plans for the town and would like to see some "git-up-an-git" by the Commercial Club or the newly-formed Lions Club, are either ridiculed or left alone to plan the venture by themselves. When a solution is found to community problems, the general opinion would seem to be to shift the entire program onto the sponsor of the plan. No outside help for community improvement is solicited and should it be offered, its acceptance by the town would be doubtful. It is believed by many that the Adair Commercial Club is something of a "dead horse" until some definite goals are established and a proper program for reaching those goals is promoted.

Others, of course, feel that Adair is gradually coming out of its slump; that, rather than regressing or standing still, it is once again progressing. Conceding that relatively few new homes have been built, and very few new business houses have been constructed, these people look with pride at the accomplishments of the past few years. A highly competitive grocery market is attracting more and more farmers into the town. This, in turn, has influenced

other merchants to further promote the sales in their respective stores. These people would say that the Commercial Club is far from being dead--that it has been more active in the past few years than at anytime in the town's modern history. They point with pride to the annual Fall Festival. They appreciate the mayor's and council's efforts to improve the streets, the lighting and water systems. They like the Catholic Church's new hall and remind all that its building was a cooperative effort. They look with favor on a new construction firm which employs upwards of thirty local men.

#### Adair's Social Life

The social life of Adair is centered around various card clubs and a weekly square dance. Of the cards played at these meetings, "pitch" seems to be the most popular game at the time of this writing. Only one "bridge" club meets and that is composed wholly of ladies. Another bridge club, with a mixed group participating, is comparatively inactive at the present time. The nearest dance hall is located eighteen miles at Stuart. The nearest skating rink is also located at Stuart. Good bowling alleys and a nice theatre are located in Atlantic, twenty-three miles west. A youth center is sorely needed in Adair. Rev. Weiss of the Lutheran Church is an active supporter of such a center. This movement is gradually gaining momentum and

is supported, though not actively, by the young members of the town.

The town is composed of a majority of Germans at this time. Some Danes are centered northwest of town, but, even there, a great many Germans are interspersed among them. Despite the strong German element, late beer drinking is held to a minimum. Three taverns are in business, but these almost invariably close before 10:30 P. M.

Adair seems to be an extraordinarily good business town for containing so few people. Its business section belies its population. The main thoroughfare runs for three blocks with business houses on either side of it. Also Highway 6, which intersects the main street, has three garages, seven filling stations, and two restaurants facing it. There is only one vacant business house in the town.

Plans are now underway to have Highway 6 by-pass Adair. Should this happen, it would naturally affect the town but probably would not affect it to any great extent, since the highway would still nearly touch the northwestern limits of the city. New establishments would have to be constructed. Personalities would suffer to be sure, but the general receipts of the town would probably remain almost constant.

Adair is only seven miles from its closest rivals,

Casey to the east and Anita to the west. Its general trade territory seems to be north and south. Despite the nearness of the rival towns, no great degree of competition seems to exist between them.

The location of Adair, at the high point, midway between Council Bluffs and Des Moines, should have held and, indeed, did hold, a tremendous advantage in earlier days. That advantage has slipped away now. The towns of Atlantic to the west and Stuart to the east seem to have grasped the business initiative. Adair is still served by the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad, has good bus connections, and receives good radio and television coverage. A young group of merchants now seem determined to make Adair once again, "the best town in Western Iowa."

#### Adair's Churches

Four churches are located in Adair. They are St. John's Catholic, New Bethol Methodist, Immanuel Lutheran, and the Presbyterian Church.

St. John's Catholic was founded in 1873 by Father Gaul. St. John's parish is centered in an attractive brick church building built in 1895. The parish also owns a fine brick rectory which was built in 1897 and a new parish hall, completed in 1955. Father William Melville is the pastor. There are sixty-five families in St. John's with eighty-four children under twelve years of age.

Methodist Church services were held in this area as early as 1861 by Rev. W. J. Adair. However, New Bethol Methodist was not organized until 1874. Rev. Mr. Tampman was the first Methodist pastor. The church itself was begun in 1880 during the pastorate of Rev. George Detweiler. The church is now under the leadership of Rev. Mr. Tschetter and has 309 active members.

The Adair Presbyterian Church was first organized on April 18, 1875 with ten charter members. The Presbyterian parish constructed a fine brick church building in 1917. The parish has grown to include 215 persons and is now under the pastorate of Rev. H. Hoeing.

The Immanuel Lutheran Church was organized on February 11, 1889 by the Reverend F. Ehlers. The congregation incorporated in 1894. The present church, a fine brick edifice, was dedicated on December 9, 1926. At the present time, the congregation is composed of 335 persons and is served by Rev. D. E. Weiss.

#### Adair's Schools

The schools of Adair are now under the leadership of Mr. Gerald Agard. The school has grown from a one-teacher affair in 1873 to a twelve-teacher system today with a total enrollment of 271 students. Mr. Agard has been quite successful in re-forming the school into an efficient institution of learning with a well-rounded



curricular offering. The school has a fine music department, a speech program, a good athletic department, an efficient commercial setup, and a manual arts and home economics department. The usual academic courses are, of course, offered. The present board of education has been successful in obtaining a Smith-Hughes man for the 1955-1956 school year, and, at present, is looking for a man to teach driver's training. The students themselves are enthusiastic about any new improvements being offered and seem appreciative of any efforts made by their elders to help.

Also under consideration, is a plan to re-organize the present Adair school district into a consolidated district. This new district would include besides Adair, Summit Township, Grant Township, and parts of Eureka, Audubon, and Bear Grove Townships. If this re-organization plan should be accepted, upwards of four hundred students would be enrolled in Adair. This would necessitate the construction of a new grade school building. The increased enrollment would affect only the grade school since the high school already draws all the students from the proposed district.

The Commercial Club president has appointed a committee to look into the possibilities of re-organization. This committee will attempt to find fifteen persons from all of the aforementioned districts who have open, objective

minds on the subject. These fifteen will meet with a representative from the State Department of Public Instruction for the purpose of laying plans for the proposed reorganization.

The backers of the reorganization plan are hopeful that this plan can be presented in its true light. They hope that the tax base for the proposed district will be large enough to enable a bigger and better school to serve the district at a very low increase in taxes to any one person or institution. These people feel that if the land is valued highly enough and the mill rate increase can be kept at a minimum, the reorganization plan has a very good chance of passing.

The tax base for the budget of the 1954-1955 school year was as follows:

Adair Property.....	\$780,196
Guthrie Property.....	49,506
Added moneys and credits.....	112,786

Any plans for reorganization must be cautiously surveyed. Plans should be well thought out before acted upon. Many people still remember the last reorganization vote taken in this community during World War II. The final vote was 480 against and only thirty for reorganization.

It is reported that at one time during the depression

years, the W. P. A. offered to build a new school building in Adair for a nominal fee, but the board of education at that time refused the offer. However, in 1948, a \$55,000 bond issue for a new gym was approved by a three to one plurality; 224 in favor, and only seventy-seven opposed. At that time, the people knew they needed a place for their youngsters to play during the winter months. Previous to this, the school had been forced to abandon basketball, class plays, grade school operettas, and other activities.

Perhaps if the need for more adequate educative facilities is recognized and the benefits of such facilities are presented, the Adair community will respond favorably once again. They have done so at every critical moment in the past: 1873, 1894, 1912, and again in 1948. But, at those times, taxes in general were not so big. The people still must think of their immediate families first, and if the district is too poor or too small to support a big school, perhaps they will defeat the redistricting plan. At any rate, it is for the people of the proposed seventy-nine sections to decide.

The destiny of Iowa and our country will soon be in the hands of our children of today. Well-educated children are not only Iowa's greatest assets, but they are the bulwark of a free America.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Leo Hoegh, Governor of Iowa, First Inaugural Address, 1955.

Summary

This chapter has noted the growth of Adair from a section house quartering eighteen men to a town of eight hundred people within a period of twenty years. Adair has been seen to expand, flourish, burn, rebuild, wither, and then prosper once again.

Adair's schools were of first importance to the pioneers of the village. The district indebted itself to the legal limit so that education might proceed in an orderly and progressive manner. The schools were a source of pride to the early inhabitants. Then with a slow-down in business and business initiative, with a speed-up of transportation and communication, with the coming of the depression, World War II, and the Korean conflict, a somewhat lackadaisical attitude toward the schools existed.

Ordinarily, a small Midwestern town, devoid of any striking improvements for fifty years, would be thought to be conservative and self-satisfied. But the Adair school district is faced with a re-building program which it can not afford. Consequently, it must look to the surrounding trade territory for financial assistance. To get that aid, new and different subjects must be offered; the old curriculum must be expanded.

Chapter II has been presented in order that the questionnaire and those persons responding to the question-

naire might be better understood. Will the residents of Adair be willing to accept new concepts of education and work toward those goals? Will they be willing to accept new ideas and new patterns of thought? It was with these things in mind that the questionnaire was presented.

### CHAPTER III

#### SURVEY RESULTS

This chapter deals with the survey which was made of Adair, Iowa. One hundred residents of Adair returned the questionnaire, a copy of which is to be found in the Appendix of this report. The questions are in direct relationship with the problem of the basic freedoms discussed in Chapter I.

"Forced" questions are quite often used in this questionnaire. By "forced" is meant that to answer negatively would be to admit to a lack of knowledge or understanding of the problem. Examples of this type of questions would be:

"Are you sincerely interested in the education of our youngsters?" and "Are you familiar with the Constitution of the United States?" It is surprising that anyone answered "no." That they did might indicate a more widespread ignorance of that particular subject.

#### Characteristics of Persons Surveyed

A total of 140 questionnaires were sent to the inhabitants of Adair and the surrounding countryside. One hundred of these were given to adults, and forty to high school students of the eleventh and twelfth grade levels.

Of the forty sent to the students, all were returned. Signatures were not required and the students were in no way coerced to bring the completed questionnaires back. This fact would seem to indicate an intense interest in the problem on the part of Adair's young people.

Some limiting factors, other than those mentioned in Chapter I, which may have influenced the results of the survey were the author's unfamiliarity to the community and the reluctance of most people to admit a certain lack of knowledge in any field whatever.

As shown by Table I, the largest group of persons answering the questionnaires was the thirty-one to fifty years of age group. These two ten year groups were equally divided at twenty apiece. This gives a fair sample of parental opinion. The next largest group was the seventeen youngsters, all eleventh grade students, who were sixteen and seventeen years of age. Following closely behind this group were the youngsters of seventeen and eighteen years of age. This latter group would represent some eleventh and some twelfth grade students of Adair High School.

The four groups already mentioned comprised seventy-three of the total one hundred questionnaires that were returned. It could be surmised that the smaller number of returns from groups of the twenty to thirty, fifty-one to sixty, and sixty-one to seventy years of age indicated that

TABLE I

CHARACTERISTICS OF PERSONS SURVEYED  
1955

Characteristics	Number	Parent		Students		Others	
		Father	Mother	Boys	Girls	Men	Women
Age							
16-17 Years.....	17			9	8		
17-18 Years.....	16			8	8		
18-19 Years.....	7			4	3		
19-20 Years.....	1						1
20-30 Years.....	9	2	2			2	3
31-40 Years.....	20	11	6			2	1
41-50 Years.....	20	9	6			3	2
51-60 Years.....	7	2	2			1	2
61-70 Years.....	2	2					
71-80 Years.....	1	1					
Total.....	100	27	16	21	19	8	9



more interest was shown by persons either of high school age or of high school parental age. However, since this was not designed as a representative sampling of all ages, it is quite possible that fewer questionnaires were sent to people of other age groups. Fifteen of the twenty persons returning survey questionnaires in the thirty-one to forty year age group were thirty-five years old or over. Seventeen were parents. It is probable that many of these parents had children of high school age.

"Are you sincerely interested in the education of our youngsters?" was asked next. All but four answered affirmatively; those four were of no opinion. One of these was a high school boy while three were adults with no children.

Though many did not state their nationality, nearly all of those who did answered, "American." One stated he was Scotch-Irish, another, German-Irish, and the rest were American. All one hundred were citizens of the United States.

The next consideration was the interest of the Adair people in world affairs. The common caricature of rural peoples isolating themselves from the everyday happenings of the world prompted the question, "Are you interested in world affairs?" The students were least interested, but still 85 per cent of them answered, "yes." Seven per cent

of the students were not interested, while 8 per cent were of no opinion. Ninety-five per cent of the adults were interested. The remaining 5 per cent were of no opinion.

In attempting to get a base from which to begin the questioning, it was decided that in order for persons to understand the basic difficulties of teaching about communism in the local school, it would be necessary for the inhabitants to be familiar with the basic law of the land. Therefore, it was asked, "Are you at all familiar with the Constitution of the United States?" Ninety-three per cent of the adults claimed they were. Three per cent said they were not. Sixty-seven per cent of the students were familiar with it; 15 per cent were not. Ten per cent were to some extent.

A question was included concerning the freedom of speech, and two more which attempted to fix the degree of freedom of speech which would be accepted by these representatives of Adair. Eight per cent of the people questioned would favor unlimited freedom of speech, including even slander. Eighty-five per cent would not go so far as to allow slander, but 85 per cent are in favor of continuing the present system of limited speech. Three per cent were not satisfied with the present conditions, but none would approve a discontinuance of the freedom of speech. One, a man, was undecided as to whether people should have any freedom of speech whatever.

In attempting to discover the extent to which the Adair community would allow its children to learn without interference, it was asked if the youngsters should have the freedom to learn, regardless of the controversial nature of the issue. Forty-four, or 73 per cent, of those adults answering, claimed they should have that freedom. Eleven per cent said, "no," and nine, or 15 per cent, were of no opinion. Eighty-two per cent of the children stated they should have the freedom to learn, 15 per cent said, "no," and 2 per cent were of no opinion.

Feeling that a conflict would result about the freedom to learn, it was next asked who should set the limits of the freedom to learn. Six choices were given. They were: (1) parents, (2) teachers, (3) society, (4) civil law, (5) church law, and (6) boards of education. The option of "no one" setting these limits was not given. Four adults, or nearly 7 per cent, wrote no one in anyway. Of the six choices, "parents" and "boards of education" each received thirty-five, or 58 per cent, of the sixty possible votes. "Church law" was third with thirty, or 50 per cent of the votes. "Teachers" was fourth at twenty-eight, or 46 per cent. "Civil law" was fifth with twenty-seven, or 45 per cent, and next, "society" at twenty-six, or 43 per cent.

TABLE II

SHOULD HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS HAVE THE FREEDOM TO LEARN  
DESPITE THE CONTROVERSIAL NATURE OF THE ISSUE?  
1955

Characteristics	Number	Yes	No	No Opinion
Students				
Boys.....	21	18	2	1
Girls.....	19	15	4	
Parents				
Mothers.....	16	11	2	3
Fathers.....	27	21	3	3
Others				
Women.....	9	7	1	1
Men.....	8	7	1	
Total.....	100	79	13	8

TABLE III

WHO SHOULD SET THE LIMITATIONS OF  
THE FREEDOM TO LEARN?  
1955

Characteristics	Number	Parents	Teachers	Society	Civil Laws	Church	Boards of Education
Students							
Boys.....	7	7	8	4	11	8	10
Girls.....	11	11	8	13	8	12	6
Parents							
Mothers.....	14	14	10	9	7	13	10
Fathers.....	18	18	10	9	8	9	13
Others							
Women.....	1	1	5	4	7	5	5
Men.....	2	2	3	4	5	3	7
Total.....	53	53	44	43	46	50	51

Twenty-six, or 43 per cent, of the adults were of the opinion that students sixteen, seventeen, and eighteen years of age do have the ability to distinguish between varying political philosophies. Thirty of the students, or 75 per cent, thought they could distinguish between these philosophies. Twenty-six, or 43 per cent, of the adults did not think the students could, but only six, or 15 per cent, of the students were of like opinion. Thirteen per cent of the adults and 10 per cent of the students were undecided.

The next question was, "Would you be in favor of presenting varying political views to the high school students and then allow them to distinguish between right and wrong?" Of those questioned, fifty-four, or 90 per cent, of the adults and thirty-five, or 95 per cent, of the students answered, "yes." Four adults and four students said, "no." Two adults and one student were of no opinion.

To graduate the questionnaire from generalities to the specific consideration of communism, it was next asked if the youngsters received enough information about communism through the radio, television, and the newspapers. Almost 12 per cent of the adults thought the young people did receive enough information through these media. Seventy-six per cent of the adults and 80 per cent of the students said, "no." The number of those having no opinion was negligible, totaling less than 4 per cent.

The parents were then asked: "Do you think your youngsters know enough about existing conditions in the world?" Of a possible forty-three, thirty-four, or 79 per cent, said, "no." The remaining nine claimed they do. Of these nine, six were women and three were men.

Members of the United States Army often complain that they have not enough time during the basic training period to teach about communism. This questionnaire asked if the basic training program is the proper place for the instruction about communism. Thirty-one per cent of the adults said "yes." But a mere 5 per cent of the students answered affirmatively. Eighty-two per cent of the students were of the opinion that basic training was not the proper place, while 58 per cent of the adults agreed. Ten per cent of the adults and 13 per cent of the students held no opinion.

TABLE IV

DO YOU THINK THAT THE TWELVE WEEK ARMY BASIC  
TRAINING PROGRAM IS THE PROPER PLACE TO  
RECEIVE INSTRUCTION ABOUT COMMUNISM?  
1955

Characteristics	Number	Yes	No	Undecided	No Opinion
Students.....	40	2	33	7	1
Adults.....	60	19	35	4	3
Total.....	100	21	68	11	4

Services

Now came the big question: "Would you favor our public schools teaching about communism?" Nearly all one hundred ventured opinions. Only 3 per cent of the adults and 5 per cent of the students abstained. Eighty-five per cent of the students were in favor of this teaching. Over 73 per cent of the adults also favored the program. Seventeen per cent of the adults and 7 per cent of the students opposed the teaching about communism in their public school.

TABLE V

WOULD YOU FAVOR HAVING YOUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
TEACHING ABOUT COMMUNISM?  
1955

Characteristics	Number	Yes	No	No opinion
Students				
Girls.....	19	16	3	
Boys.....	21	18		3
Parents				
Mothers.....	16	11	5	
Fathers.....	27	19	4	4
Others				
Women.....	9	8	1	
Men.....	8	6		2
Total.....	100	78	13	9

The next question was for the purpose of finding out who or what the questioned persons thought would be harmed most by such a program. They were given six choices, namely:



(1) the school, (2) the community, (3) the nation, (4) the student, (5) the teacher, and (6) communism. The actual question was, "Do you feel this teaching would be dangerous to:" It was explained that any number of the six choices could be checked. A majority of both students and adults thought communism would suffer most. Of the adults, 63 per cent picked communism. Twenty-two per cent of the adults thought the students might be hurt. The nation was next at 17 per cent; the community with 10 per cent; the school, 10 per cent; and lastly, the teacher, 10 per cent.

Seventy-five per cent of the students claimed communism would be hurt most. Twenty per cent of the students believed the teacher would suffer. The community, the school, and the nation followed at 15 per cent. The students felt they had the least to lose by the teaching about communism in the classroom. Twelve per cent were of the opinion that they could be hurt by such teaching.

How would such a teaching program be conducted? Seventy-one per cent of the total questioned stated that the teaching of the general history of communism would not be enough. Sixteen per cent would stop with the teaching of this history. Sixty-nine per cent would include personalities such as Lenin, Marx, Engels, and Stalin. Twenty-two per cent would not. Fifty-three per cent of those questioned would include the philosophy of the community party

TABLE VI  
TO WHOM, OR WHAT, WOULD SUCH TEACHING  
BE DANGEROUS?  
1955

Characteristics	Number	Schools	Community	Nation	Student	Teacher	Communism
Students							
Girls.....	19	2	3	3	4	5	14
Boys.....	21	4	3	3	1	3	16
Parents							
Mothers.....	16	4	5	4	6	2	8
Fathers.....	27	4	2	3	3	2	15
Others							
Women.....	9		1	2	3	3	8
Men.....	8	1	1	1	1		7
Total.....	100	15	15	16	18	15	68

without including the philosophy of the free western nations. Thirty-nine per cent would not. Eight per cent were of no opinion.

The question, "Would you include the philosophy of the communist party, as compared to the philosophy of the western nations?" was answered in the affirmative by 43 per cent of the adults, but by only 5 per cent of the students. Forty-three per cent of the adults said, "no," while 90 per cent of the students claimed they would not.

Both the adults and students showed renewed interest when the question of religious participation in communist-dominated countries was raised. Eighty-three per cent of the adults would definitely teach about the discouragement of this religious participation in those nations. Ninety per cent of the students and 17 per cent of the adults would not include this teaching. Ten per cent of the adults refused to answer; of these, all were men.

Sixty-two per cent of the adults would like to attend a course about communism. Seventy-one per cent of the adults would keep an eye on the administration of the course. Ten per cent of the adults would object to including a course in the teaching about communism in their high school. Eight per cent would object violently.

Of those questioned, 55 per cent seemed to realize the extent of communist domination of the world; 37 per

cent did not. Eight per cent did not answer.

Sixty-two per cent were aware of the ideological conflict between the eastern communist nations and the free western nations. Twenty-six per cent said they were not aware of this conflict. Twelve per cent did not answer.

TABLE VII

ARE YOU AWARE OF THE IDEOLOGICAL CONFLICT  
BETWEEN COMMUNISM AND REPUBLICANISM?  
1955

Characteristics	Number	Yes	No	No Opinion
Students.....	40	21	14	5
Adults.....	60	41	12	7
Total.....	100	63	26	12

To establish a relationship between degrees of thought toward these international problems, a series of four questions were asked. These questions were:

1. Do you ever think about the communist threat to America?
2. Do you talk about it to your family?
3. Would you rather not talk about it?
4. Would you rather not think about it?

It was found that 75 per cent of the adults and 98 per cent of the students do think about the communist threat. Sixty per cent of the adults and 40 per cent of the children talk about it with their families. Fifteen per cent of the

students, and eight per cent of the adults would rather not talk about the communist threat. Twenty-three per cent of the adults and 11 per cent of the students do not even like to think about it. Sixty per cent of the adults and 80 per cent of the students have no fear of thinking about communism.

Three-fourths of the adults and 97 per cent of the students would like to know more about both the communist philosophy and the capitalistic philosophy. Thirteen per cent of the adults and 3 per cent of the students were not at all interested in the learning about either philosophy.

A general question was again asked. This dealt with the apparent ignoring of the communist doctrine before children in the classroom. It asked whether or not this ignoring tends to make the children more vulnerable to communist propaganda. Sixty-five per cent of the adults said it did make them more vulnerable. Eighteen per cent said, "no." The rest were undecided.

TABLE VIII

DO YOU FEEL, PERHAPS, THAT IGNORING THE COMMUNIST  
DOCTRINE BEFORE OUR CHILDREN IN THE CLASSROOM  
MAKES THEM MORE VULNERABLE  
TO COMMUNIST PROPAGANDA?

1955

Characteristics	Number	Yes	No	No Opinion
Students.....	40	15	8	17
Adults.....	60	39	11	10
Total.....	100	54	19	27

And, finally, of the adults was asked, "If a relative of yours were in a communist prison camp, would you wish he knew more about the Eastern and Western doctrines?" Ninety per cent answered, "yes." Four per cent said, "no," and 6 per cent were of no opinion.

#### Teachers' Reports

A questionnaire was also sent to the five teachers of Adair High School. The high school faculty is composed of two women, three men, and the superintendent, Mr. Agard. Mr. Agard was not included in the questioning. Both of the women teachers are married, and one has a family. Two of the men are married, and both have families. Two of the men are veterans of World War II. None are veterans of the Korean conflict.

Five questions were asked of the teachers. They were:

1. Would you feel well enough informed to teach about communism?
2. Do you feel adequately trained by your college to teach about communism?
3. Do you feel that such a training program by both high schools and colleges should be undertaken?
4. Do you think such a program would be a service to:
  - a. The student?
  - b. Western society?
  - c. Eastern society?
  - d. The U. S. Army?
  - e. The nation?

5. In your opinion, are the schools of the United States doing all they can to combat the infiltration of communist doctrine into the minds of our youngsters?

Only one teacher, a man, answered "yes" to either of the first two questions. He did to both. All five believed such a training program should be undertaken by the high schools and colleges. None of these teachers felt the schools are doing all they can to combat communism in the schools.

The answers given to the fourth question are shown in Table IX.

TABLE IX

DO YOU FEEL SUCH A PROGRAM WOULD BE OF SERVICE  
TO THE: NATION, STUDENTS, WEST,  
U. S. ARMY, COMMUNISM?  
1955

Characteristics	Nation	Students	West	U. S. Army	Communism
Women.....	2	1	2	2	. .
Men.....	3	3	3	2	. .
Total.....	5	4	5	4	. .



## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION

In this study, an attempt has been made to measure and evaluate the preponderance of public opinion in the Adair, Iowa community concerning the possibilities of instituting into the curriculum of the Adair high school social studies program, a course concerning communism.

Chapter I.--In the first chapter, an attempt has been made to define the general problem of correlating the two extremes of "ultra-Americanism" with communism and arriving at some workable solution from which to begin the study of this problem. This chapter generally concedes to the point of view that without enlightenment, and without compromise, this nation's system of free thought and free enterprise will eventually be "chained" either by the extreme left or by the extreme right. In this chapter, the stand is taken that society is dependent on the free interchange of ideas; that to be able to progress, changes must be accepted in the basic social pattern; that to accept repression is to invite disaster.

Chapter II.--The second chapter has dealt with Adair, Iowa, its founding, its growth, and its development

from 1869 to 1955. The purpose of this particular phase of the study was to parallel, or contrast, the original settlers of the community with those inhabitants of Adair today. In doing so, it was found that the early inhabitants invited instruction, progress, and debt in order to give to their children the education they thought was pertinent to the needs of those children. It was found that the early inhabitants welcomed change and progress; they had a great deal of pride in Adair and wanted to attain and maintain a high standard of social and economic values in the town.

The residents of today, after a twenty-five year drought of initiative, are once again inviting progress and change. New buildings are being erected, and new businesses are coming into the town. The school is being transformed from an institution offering only the barest of essential instruction to one of well-rounded curricular offering. As will be summarized later, it seems that the inhabitants would welcome new and controversial ideas as well as new curricular offerings.

Chapter III.--The third chapter is a report of the answers to a questionnaire, submitted to various persons of the community, returned by one hundred of those persons, concerning the problem of teaching about communism in the Adair High School. Many aspects were taken into consideration

in this questionnaire. Some of these aspects are listed below.

1. The awareness of the general public of the Adair community toward the communist "menace."
2. The interest of the community in this problem of communism.
3. The dangers, if any, of teaching about communism in the Adair school system.
4. The ability of high school students to distinguish between political philosophies.
5. The right of students to have the freedom to learn.
6. The need for such a program of learning in the Adair High School.
7. Objections and the degree of these objections to such a teaching program.

A census of the questioned persons showed that of the entire group of one hundred returnees, forty-three were parents, forty were students, and seventeen were neither students nor parents. The ages of the entire group ranged from sixteen to eighty.

Many of the questions asked were "leading" or "forced" questions in which if the answers were "yes," the returnee would appear to be a bit more enlightened toward the problem than if the answers were "no." Taking into consideration the natural reluctance of the members of the human race to admit to being uninformed, or uneducated, or illiberal, it would probably be naive to assume that all answers by all those questioned would be completely

within the realm of complete honesty and reason. Too, on any controversial question, emotions tend to interfere with good judgment. At times, it is impossible to think clearly when emotions block the reasoning process. This could be a limitation to this particular study. However, there has never been an absolutely foolproof method of questioning devised.

This study, then, should not be considered the ultimate answer to the question of teaching about communism in the public high schools generally. It is only a step toward the solution of that problem.

It is interesting to notice the rich divergence of opinion toward this question between the students and the adults. Many times the students have an overwhelming faith in their own abilities to choose the proper instruction and the best methods of attaining that instruction.

Also, it should be noted that the ratio between the number of questionnaires sent and the number returned by the students was much higher than the ratio by the adults. In passing, it should be stated that no coercion of any kind was used in getting the students to answer and return the questionnaires. Yet, the returns by the students were in direct ratio to the number sent. This would indicate a vital interest in this problem by the students themselves.

At times the minority objecting to or opposing certain aspects of the program is very small. But anyone employed in public service recognizes the power of small, closely-knit minorities. If such minorities are capable of creating dissension and unrest among the general population, it would be unwise, from the standpoint of teacher tenure, to combat such groups. Therefore, a majority opinion, in this case, does not necessarily present a "go-ahead" signal to this teaching process.

The findings of this study, however, would seem to indicate that the community of Adair, Iowa realizes the importance of the teaching about communism in its schools. On the basis of this survey, provided the course was taught by competent and capable teachers and properly administered and supervised, the author believes such a program would meet with success in that community.

## APPENDIX

Letter Accompanying Questionnaire

Adair, Iowa

December 20, 1955

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

The attached form is a questionnaire concerning the teaching about a controversial issue (communism) in the Adair Public Schools.

The results of the questionnaire will be tabulated and used in the formulation of a thesis requirement for the Master of Science in Education Degree at Drake University, Des Moines, Iowa.

I would appreciate your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Wayne R. Peters

Questionnaire

1. What is your age? Sex?
2. Are you a parent? Student? Other?
3. Are you a citizen of the United States?
4. Are you sincerely interested in the education of our youngsters?
5. Are you interested in world affairs?
6. Are you at all familiar with the Constitution of the U. S.?
7. Do you favor unlimited freedom of speech? (Would include slander).
8. Do you favor limited freedom of speech such as we have in this country?
9. Would you favor no freedom of speech whatever?
10. Do you feel that youngsters of all ages should have the freedom to learn irregardless of the controversial nature of the issue?
11. Do you feel that youngsters should have the right to learn within limits set by:
 

Parents	Civil law
Teachers	Church law
Society	Boards of education
12. Do you believe that students 16, 17, or 18 years of age have the ability to distinguish between varying political philosophies?
13. Would you be in favor of presenting varying political views to the high school students and then allow them to distinguish between right and wrong?
14. Would you favor our public schools teaching about communism?
15. Do you feel this teaching would be dangerous:
 

To the school	To the student
To the community	To the teacher
To the nation	To communism



16. Do you think our youngsters get enough information about communism from the radio, television, and the newspapers?
17. Do you feel the twelve week army basic training program is the proper place to receive instruction about communism?
18. If you do favor this teaching in our high schools, do you feel the teaching of communist history would be enough?
19. Would you favor the inclusion of personalities such as Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin?
20. Would you include the philosophy of the communist party as compared to the philosophy of the free western nations?
21. Would you include the philosophy of the communist party without the comparison of the philosophies of the western nations?
22. Would you include the teaching about the absence of religious participation in the East?
23. Would you be interested enough in this course to check on the student's findings?
24. Would you be interested enough to attend the course yourself?
25. Would you object to this course?
26. Would you object violently?
27. Do you realize the extent of communist domination of the world?
28. Are you aware of the ideological conflict between East and West?
29. Do you ever think about the communist threat to America?
30. Do you talk about it to your family?
31. Would you rather not talk about it?
32. Would you rather not think about it?

33. Do you understand the basic differences between the political philosophies of the East and the West?
34. Would you like to know more about the two philosophies?
35. Parents: Do you think your youngsters know enough about existing world conditions?
36. Do you feel, perhaps, that the ignoring of the communist doctrine before our children in the classroom makes them more vulnerable to communist propaganda?
37. Do you think the twenty-two American boys would have stayed in China if they had known both sides of the controversy?
38. If a relative of yours were in a communist prison camp would you wish he knew more about the Eastern and Western doctrines?

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